



SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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Race, Poverty and Academic Achievement

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The following data illustrate the relationship between race, poverty and academic achievement. They are a call to action.

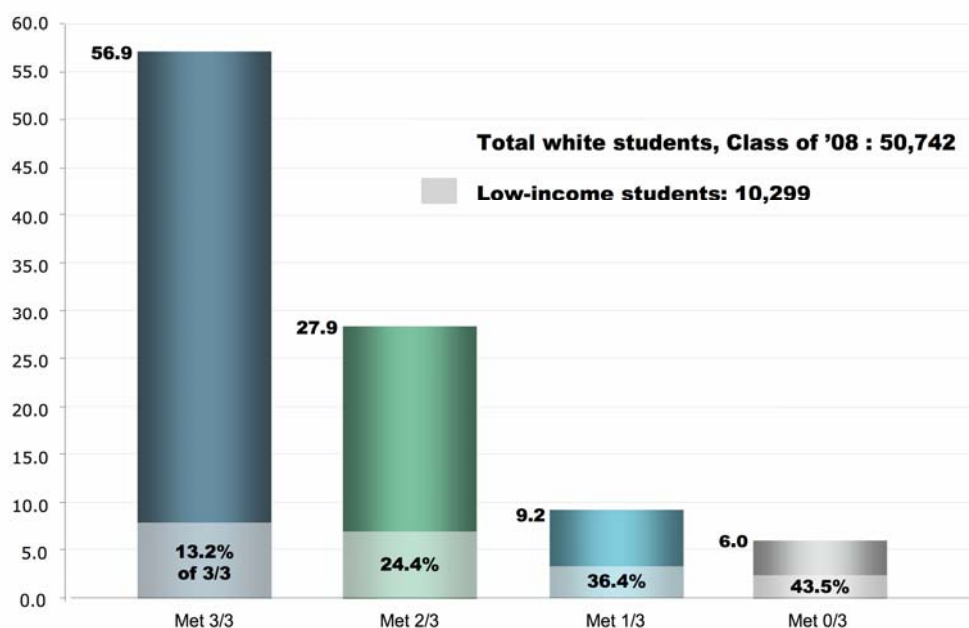
The data show both the disproportionate under-achievement of specific groups of students, and the against-the-odds successes of students in those groups who face every possible disadvantage, but who are meeting and exceeding academic standards.

So, as we study this data, two sets of questions emerge: What needs to change to prevent failure? And what can we learn from the students who are succeeding, their families, the communities they live in, and the schools they attend?

More important, how we will help struggling students during their junior and senior high school years (and in some cases beyond those years) master the skills and knowledge they will need to graduate and succeed?

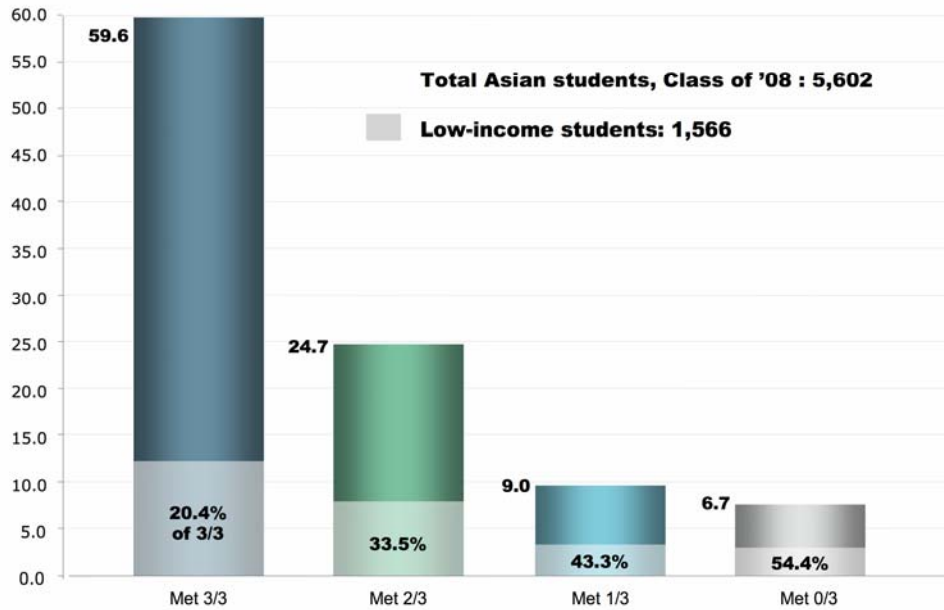
2006 WASL: White students

10th-grade students meeting standard in one or more subject areas



2006 WASL: Asian/Pacific Islander students

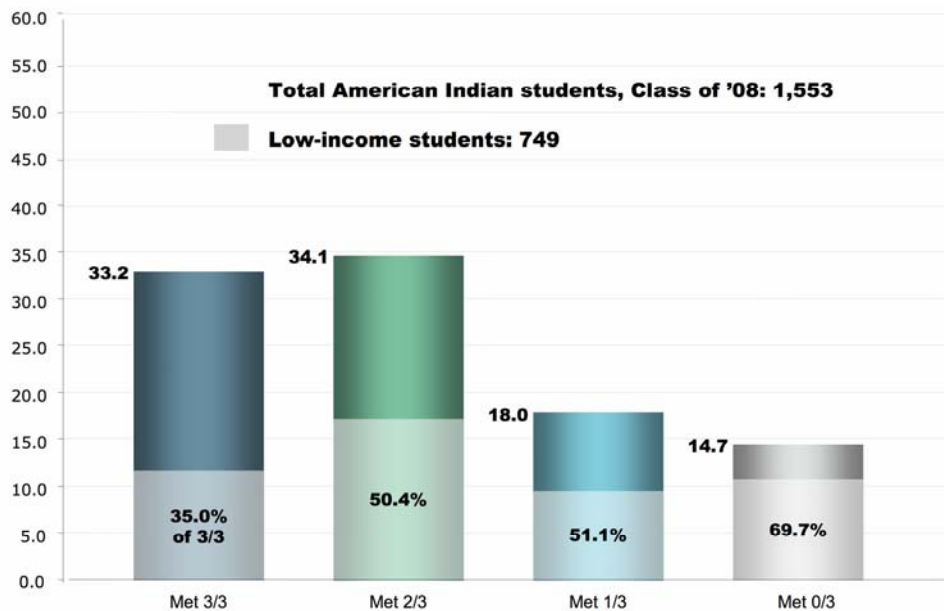
Asian/Pacific Islander students meeting standard in one or more subject areas



There are significant differences among sub-groups of Asian and Pacific Islander populations. Students from Pacific island nations and recent immigrants from certain Asian countries are much more likely to be poor and to have a hard time in school.

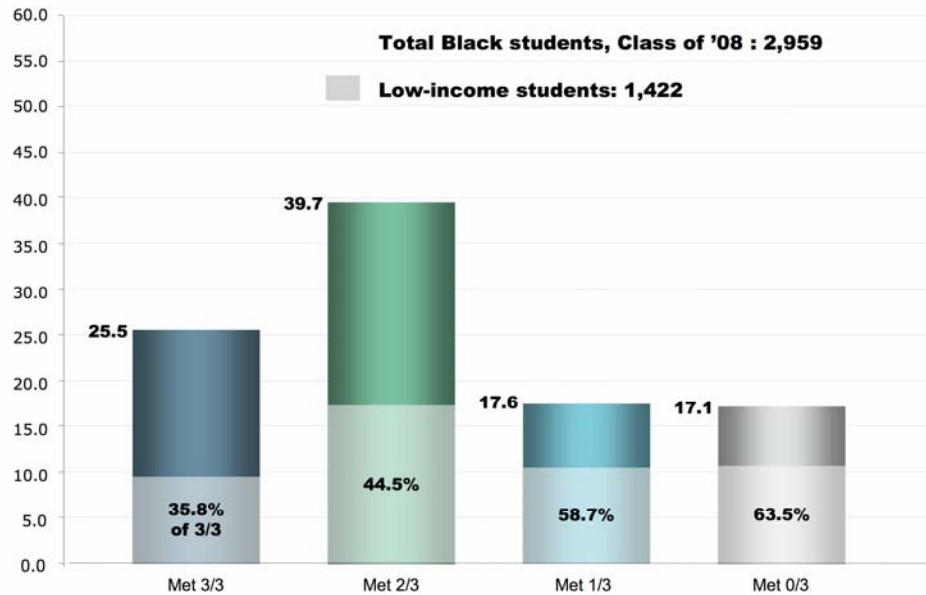
2006 WASL: American Indian students

10th-grade students meeting standard in one or more subject areas



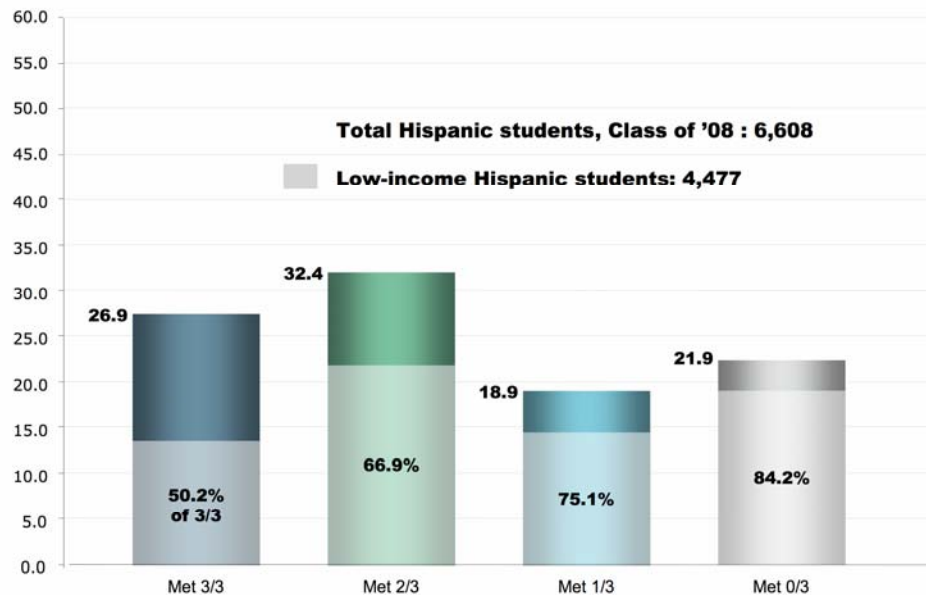
2006 WASL: Black students

10th-grade students meeting standard in one or more subject areas



2006 WASL: Hispanic students

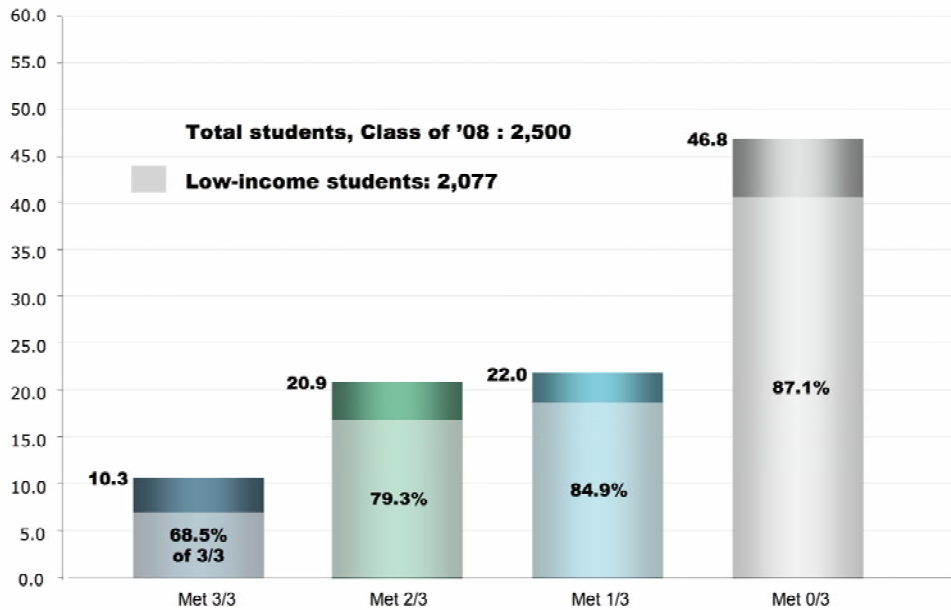
10th-grade students meeting standard in one or more subject areas



A note about the numbers: In the class of 2008, the numbers of students of color are small enough that it is not unrealistic to think that each of these students can be identified, surrounded with academic, social and emotional support, and helped to succeed. To do this, strong partnerships between schools, families and communities will be vital. OSPI grants to six school/community partnerships are supporting this effort, but more partnerships are needed.

2006 WASL: ELL students

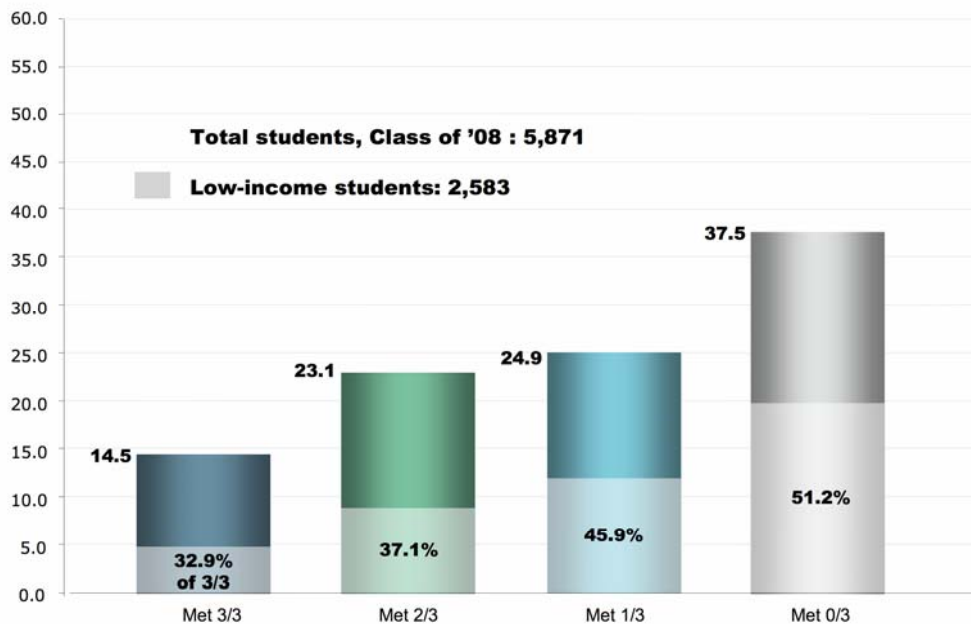
10th-grade students meeting standard in one or more subject areas



Among all groups of students, English Language Learners are the most likely to be poor and the least likely to be experiencing success in school. Nonetheless, a high percentage of those who have passed all three WASLs live in poverty.

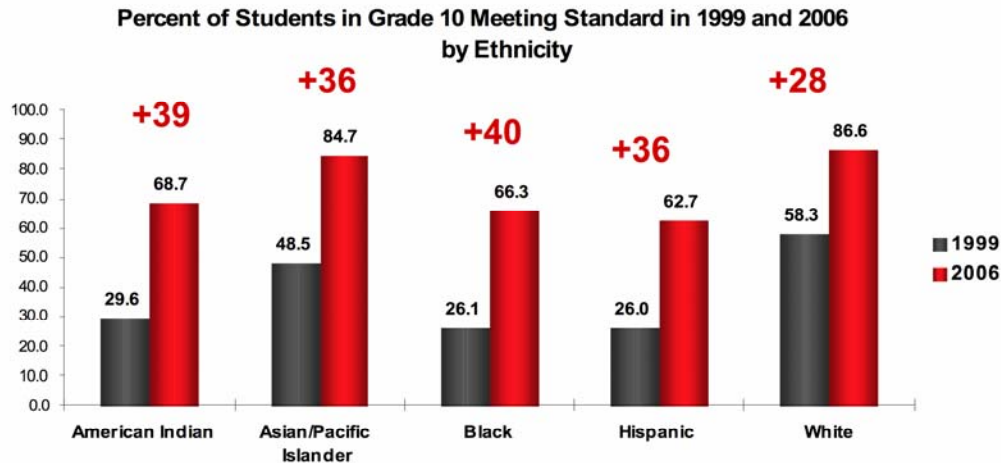
2006 WASL: students in special education

10th-grade students meeting standard in one or more subject areas



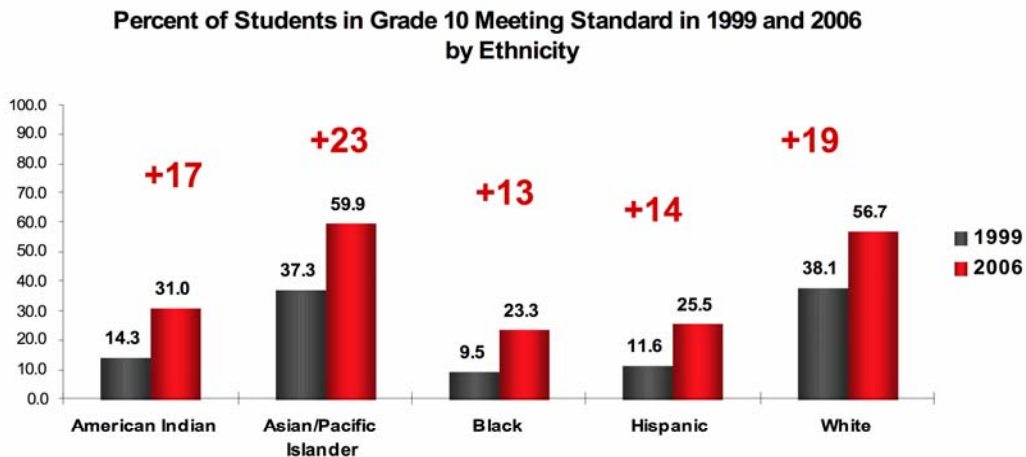
In addition to the data about student achievement, this graph reveals that a disproportionate number of students with disabilities are low-income. What causes this link between income and disability?

The achievement gap is narrowing in reading



In reading, where the K-12 system and local families and communities have invested the greatest effort and resources in improvement, the achievement gap has narrowed. A similar but smaller narrowing has occurred in writing.

The achievement gap is **not** closing in mathematics



Where educators are struggling most, students are struggling most. Mathematics instruction is our national Achilles' heel.

What will it take to close the gap?

I. Early learning and all-day kindergarten

The achievement gap begins with the “preparation gap” experienced by many children who start school already behind their peers in vocabulary, social skills, and number sense.

II. Continued school improvement and high-quality teaching

There are specific changes that OSPI, school districts, and educators are making and advocating that will narrow the gap. These include:

- Skilled, culturally competent teaching for students most at risk (and for all students), supported by a state strategic plan for educator professional development;
- Personalized learning and strong, supportive relationships between caring adults and students, such as those fostered by the Navigation 101 guidance program;
- Rigorous curriculum that is culturally relevant to students;
- More instructional time and support for struggling students;
- Significant improvements in programs for English Language Learners; and
- Welcoming school climates that are free of prejudice and low expectations.

III. Stronger partnership between families, communities and schools

The relationship between schools, families and communities is also critical. Building trust between parents and schools requires focused investments of time and resources, and genuine openness to new ways of working together. Stronger partnerships can produce:

- Community-based tutoring and homework help;
- Career exploration and future-oriented activities that help students see the relationship between school and their future;
- Effective interventions with students identified as at risk of dropping out;
- Cultural and faith-based support for academic achievement; and
- Consistent community pressure to direct educational resources to the students who need them most.

IV. A stronger safety net for children and adolescents

The final necessary component for closing the gap is a stronger safety net for students who have extraordinary out-of-school barriers to learning, such as homelessness, out-of-home placement, child abuse or neglect, untreated mental or physical health issues, or substance addiction. Addressing these issues will require stronger partnerships between the education and human services systems, and greater investments in specific human services for children and adolescents.